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C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 000856

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/PB, SCA/FO, DRL, S/CT AND G

EO 12958 DECL: 08/10/2018
TAGS PGOV, PHUM, PINR, MASS, PREL, BG
SUBJECT: ENGAGING BANGLADESH'S RAPID ACTION BATTALION:
VISIT BY USG INTERAGENCY ASSESSMENT TEAM
REF: STATE 61983

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary =====

1. (C) The leadership of Bangladesh's Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has pledged to provide additional information about alleged human rights violations. RAB Pledges Full Support After Meetings with USG Team =====

2. (C) A USG interagency team from the Departments of State, Defense, and Justice visited Dhaka July 12 - 16 to conduct an assessment of Bangladesh's human rights record.

3. (C) The assessment team's visit followed several months of intensive discussions between the RAB and the Embassy, as well as meetings with civil society.

4. (C) The two days of meetings with the RAB, therefore, focused on gaining a better understanding of the RAB's past human rights record and its current operations.

5. (C) The discussions with the RAB also provided the assessment team with insight into the areas in which USG assistance, at both the tactical and strategic levels, could be most effective. Meetings with Civil Society Provide Nuanced View =====

6. (C) In order to provide the assessment team with a balanced view of the RAB, we arranged meetings with members of civil society in Dhaka and other locations.

7. (C) A strong message from many civil society interlocutors was that the RAB enjoys a great deal of respect and admiration from a population that has experienced decades of military rule. Bureaucracy is Potential Stumbling Block =====

8. (C) The team's final meetings with representatives of the Foreign Ministry and Home Ministry indicated that some levels of the government have been open to dialogue. Comment =====

9. (C) Embassy Dhaka greatly appreciates the efforts of State, DoD, and Justice to send the assessment team to Bangladesh to interact with the RAB and civil society.

10. (U) The inter-agency assessment team has cleared this message. Moriarty